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ABSTRACT

This study measured the interpersonal needs of the counselor and counselee using the FIRO-B Scale to determine their effect on the subject's reaction to a counseling interview. Each counselor and counselee met with a compatible and an incompatible subject within the counterbalanced research designed. The general hypothesis for the study was that the interpersonal compatibility of the counselor and the counselee would have a positive effect on: (1) counselor and counselee feelings and reactions toward the counseling relationship; and (2) reactions towards each other. The results of the statistical testing of the hypotheses indicated that interpersonal compatibility did not have a significant effect, and suggested that the theory may be inadequate for determining outcomes in initial counseling relationships. Among the implications were that: (1) felt progress; (2) interest of the interviewer; (3) an estimation of the interviewer's ability to help; and (4) rewards and costs should also be considered when investigating counseling relationships. (Author/TA)

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INTERPERSONAL COMPATIBILITY:
A TEST OF FIRO THEORY
IN THE COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The interpersonal needs of the counselor and counselee, as measured by FIRO-B, were assessed to determine their effect on the subject's reaction to a counseling interview. Each counselor and counselee met with a compatible and an incompatible subject within the counterbalanced research designed.

The results indicate that there was no significant difference between the counselors' reactions and the counselees' reactions for the compatible and incompatible interviews. Further investigation using specific interpersonal needs is suggested.

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INTERPERSONAL COMPATIBILITY:

A TEST OF FIRO THEORY

IN THE COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP[1]

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[1]Based on part of a dissertation submitted September 1968 to the Department of Counselor Education, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree. The author wishes to thank his advisor Dr. Gerald Gladstein for his assistance.

INTERPERSONAL COMPATIBILITY:
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IN THE COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP

Gerald M. Arndt

A number of discussions in the literature suggest that the interpersonal interaction, determined by a specific counselor and counselee dyad, facilitate or hinder the counseling relationship. Sullivan (1949, p. 105) stated that the characteristic ways people have of relating to one another carries with it factors which are functional and factors which may be inhibiting. Other discussions suggest that the factors which allow for desirable outcomes and cooperative functioning of counselor and counselee may be the interpersonal needs which the counselor and counselee bring to the setting.

Tagiuri and Blake (1958) found in their research that if the interaction in the interpersonal setting was not satisfying, the participants' perceptions of the situation and feelings toward the other person were influenced. Snyder (1959, 1961), Luborsky and Strupp (1962), Heller, Myers, and Kline (1963), Truax and Carkhuff (1964), Canon (1964), and Lorr (1965) also suggested that the satisfaction of interpersonal needs of the counselor and counselee may allow for increased productivity in counseling.

The satisfaction of interpersonal needs, defined for the purpose of this study as: "A requirement for a person to establish a satisfactory relation between himself and other people" (Schutz, 1958, p. 191), may be an essential dynamic in understanding the counseling relationship. Sociologists and psychologists (Leary, 1957; Winch, 1958; Secord and Backman, 1961; Heider, 1958; Newcomb, 1961; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Homans, 1961; and Schutz, 1958)

have presented and discussed various theoretical approaches and research to test interpersonal interaction dimensions.

The theory selected for the purposes of this study most clearly and cogently expresses the interchange which is involved in the counseling relationship. Several reasons can be cited for selecting this theory over other theories. First, the theory developed by Schutz (1958) is an interpersonal theory which suggests that man's basic source of conflict is other men. Secondly, the anxiety created in interpersonal situations is a lack of agreement as to the role each person is to play in the relationship. Third, the main goal of the theory is increased effectiveness in developing valid communication (Bennis, Schein, Berlew and Steele, 1964). A fourth reason for selecting the theory is that it is based on sociological and psychological characteristics which an individual has developed as a result of his past relationship, yet these characteristics can be described behaviorally as the expressed and wanted behavior which an individual desires in his present relations with other people (Schutz, 1958).

Of primary concern in this study then, was the application of the theoretical constructs of Schutz (FIRO - B compatibility and incompatibility) to the participants in counseling interviews and to assess their personal reactions immediately following the interviews.

Method

Subjects

Twenty-four volunteer counselors-in-training and twenty-four volunteer eighth grade counselees served as subjects,

The subjects in the counselor sample were students in a graduate counseling practicum course, and were involved in counseling with other counselees prior to the study. The counselee subjects were from a parochial school from two classrooms. The counselee subjects did not have previous contacts with counselors.

Instruments

The FIRO-B scale, developed by Schutz (1958) and published by Consulting Psychologists Press, is an instrument consisting of fifty-four items. The instrument is designed to predict interaction or how a person behaves in interpersonal situations. Expressed and wanted behavior assessment, within the areas of inclusion, control, and affection, allows for a determination of the degree of compatibility of people who may be involved in interpersonal interaction. The scale is unique in that it not only measures wanted and expressed behavior but also allows for the combination of these characteristics in various ways to predict behavior between people.

The FIRO-B scale is a Guttman scaled instrument which has an internal consistency measure of reproducibility of .94 . Test-retest reliability is .76 . Hutcherson (1963) found that the FIRO-B can be used with junior high students with the same degree of reliability as with adult groups. The widespread use of this instrument in many areas of interpersonal involvement attests to the regard held for the FIRO-B.

Counselee Instrumentation

The Counselee's Personal Reaction Questionnaire was adapted from an instrument called the Client's Personal Reaction Questionnaire developed by Ashby, Ford, Guerney, and Guerney (1957). This instrument was used by this group in four doctoral dissertations completed at Pennsylvania State University.

The questionnaire consisted of forty positive and forty negative items intended to measure positive subjective reactions to counseling and defensive subjective reactions to counseling. The scoring for each item was based on a five point rating scale which ranged from not characteristic to highly characteristic.

Counselor Instrumentation

The Counselor's Personal Reaction Questionnaire was also adapted from the work of Ashby, Ford, Guerney, and Guerney (1957). This questionnaire was developed in the same manner as the Counselee's Personal Reaction

Questionnaire.

The scores on this instrument were used to determine the counselor's subjective feelings and reactions to the counseling interview. There were thirty-five negative items and thirty-five positive items to which the counselor responded on a scale from highly characteristic of his feelings and reactions.

Procedure

The twenty-four counselors-in-training in the Counseling Theory and Practicum courses of the University of Rochester, College of Education, Department of Guidance and Student Personnel, were administered the FIRO-B when they volunteered to participate in the study. The twenty-four counselees who volunteered to participate in the study were administered the FIRO-B. Counselors and counselees who volunteered to participate in the study were assigned the treatment order by use of a table of random numbers. The forty-eight counselor and counselee combinations were determined on the basis of compatibility scores obtained from the FIRO-B using a procedure suggested by Schutz (1958).

Counselors reported for a thirty to forty minute interview with an assigned counselee. The counselor and the counselee were informed of their specific assignments approximately five minutes before the interview. They were not given pre-interview information as to whether they were meeting with a compatible or incompatible person. Sessions were then held, with taping of sessions permitted, where counselees had given their permission. A forty minute time limit was enforced on the educational, vocational, and personal social interviews.

Upon completion of the interview, the counselor and the counselee responded to the research instruments. Each was assigned to a separate room and given the packet of materials to be completed. The researcher was available to answer questions. After responding to the research instruments both counselor and counselee were reminded of their second interview with

a different subject which was to take place approximately one week later. No mention was made of a specific counselor or counselee assignment nor whether the person assigned was compatible or not.

In the administration of the post-treatment instruments, mention was made of the confidentiality of the responses. No request was made of the subjects to sign their names. Codes were used to identify the counselor-counselee combinations.

Results

The results of the study concerning the reactions of counselor and counselee subjects under compatible and incompatible interview treatments are presented in this section in terms of the null hypothesis tested. The level of significance set for this study was .05 . The data were analyzed using a factorial analysis of variance which Lindquist (1953, pp. 273-281) recommends for a Type LI mixed design. Specific computational procedures used were outlined by Winer (1963, pp. 541-542).

The first hypothesis tested was that there is no difference between counselee feelings and reactions toward the counselor and the counseling relationship when paired as compatible with counselors and when paired as incompatible with counselors.

Insert Table I

TABLE I

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF COUNSELEE

PERSONAL REACTION

Source	df	MS	F
Between Subjects	23		
AB (Groups)	1	2437.04	1.31
Error (Subjects within groups)	22	1863.35	
Within Subjects	24		
A (Treatment)	1	481.33	<1.00
B (Order)	1	5807.71	2.78
Error (Within)	22	2088.07	

Note--F is significant at the .05 level when it is equal to or greater than 4.30 for 1 and 22 degrees of freedom.

Results of the analysis of variance for this hypothesis are given in Table I. The groups serve as a quasi-factor (Winer, 1962, p. 543). Within the design, groups become confounded with the order and treatment interaction and "the interaction effect is entirely a 'between' subjects effect" (Lindquist, 1953, p. 280). The order and treatment effects become entirely within effects (Lindquist, 1953, p. 278).

The results of the analysis of variance indicated that the compatibility effect, the order effect, and the interaction effect did not approach significance. Significance is 4.30 for 1 and 22 degrees of freedom at the .05 level. At the .10 level, 2.95 is significant; at the .25 level, 1.40 is significant.

The results indicated that the F ratio for interaction and for order effect was greater than the F ratio for the treatment effect. The order effect approached the .10 level of significance. Interaction and order had a greater effect than the treatment effect. However, the treatment effect and the order effect were in the predicted direction.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no difference between counselor feelings and reactions toward the counselee and the counseling

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Insert Table II

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relationship when paired as compatible with counselees and when paired as incompatible with counselees. Table II indicates the analysis of variance results for this hypothesis. The results indicated that there was no significant interaction effect, no significant treatment effect, and no significant order effect. The largest F ratio resulted from the interaction effect.

TABLE II

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF COUNSELOR

PERSONAL REACTION

Source	df	MS	F
Between Subjects	23		
AB (Groups)	1	3657.50	1.59
Error (Subjects within groups)	22	2300.73	
Within Subjects	24		
A (Treatment)	1	1598.50	<1.00
B (Order)	1	6.00	<1.00
Error (Within)	22	2217.81	

Note--F is significant at the .05 level when it is equal to or greater than 4.30 for 1 and 22 degrees of freedom.

An investigation of the mean scores for the treatment and order effects indicated a trend in the mean scores. This trend indicated a more positive mean response to the compatible treatment when presented first, and a less positive response to the incompatible treatment when presented second. There was a more positive mean response to the incompatible treatment when presented first with a less positive mean response to the compatible treatment when presented second. (See Table III)

The null hypothesis was accepted for counselor personal reaction.

Insert Table III

DISCUSSION

The general hypothesis for the study was that the interpersonal compatibility of the counselor and the counselee would have a positive effect on counselor and counselee feelings and reations toward the counseling relationship and toward each other. The results of the statistical testing of the hypotheses indicated that interpersonal compatibility did not have a significant effect. The results suggest that the theory may be inadequate for determining outcomes in initial counseling relationships.

The theory proposed by Schutz may not have the effect which was suggested when considering the initial interview situation provided one can assume that there was enough opportunity for the interpersonal compatibility needs of the participants to become paramount. Theoretically, the position developed by Schutz is that the constructs pertaining to the theory have a powerful effect on interpersonal relations and reactions. If this is so, even with the small sample, the effect would have been visible. However, the use of the material and the test developed from the theory could have been confounded as a result

TABLE III

GROUP MEANS BY CELL FOR COMPATIBLE AND INCOMPATIBLE TREATMENTS AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

(N=24)

Source	Group 1 Order		Group 2 Order	
	C	I	I	C
Counselee Personal Reaction	159.17	138.58	174.83	166.92
Counselor Personal Reaction	160.33	131.33	148.08	142.17

Note - A larger mean response score indicates a more positive reaction. C = compatible treatment; I = incompatible treatment.

of the design and research procedures. Perhaps only the inclusion dimension should have been used for the initial interview. Use of the control dimension within the design used may have also been feasible. A further consideration is derived from the work of Sapolsky (1965). In his research, the doctor-patient compatibility did not hold for the initial sessions, but did influence the results over a series of sessions.

The compatibility dimensions of FIRO-B, as developed by Schutz should be examined more closely. For example, the dimension of control may be the important characteristic of a limited contact counseling relationship as used in this study and which occurs most frequently in the school setting. Sapolsky (1964) found, for college students who had limited contact, the control dimension, whether compatible or incompatible, was significantly related to either liking or disliking. For those students who had long term contacts with other students, as indicated again in Sapolsky's study, affection and control were more closely related to liking or disliking, depending on the compatibility dimension.

Other dimensions should also be considered. Sapolsky (1965) found that persons new to a field (medicine) reacted less positively and perhaps less openly to the setting. One could suggest this trend for the people used in this study; namely, that both participants were new or non-experienced, in which instance each may have been playing a role, which was conjectured from other experiences, as opposed to operating on the basic needs as measured by FIRO-B. The theory, as presented, is related to human interaction in any setting. Abrahamson (1966, pp. 13-29) considered not only the past learnings of an individual as critical factors in accommodation in interpersonal settings, but also considered response inhibition and vicarious learning as two valuable processes which humans have available to them. Vicarious learning allows the

individual to adjust this behavior to others even though he had had no previous experience or contact with the other person. Response inhibition refers to the ability of consider only certain stimuli while relating with others. This capacity to selectively respond can allow humans to accomodate one another in an interpersonal setting such as counseling. This provides support for investigating the FIRO theory more thoroughly in a variety of counseling situations and not just consider the theory as a powerful force in any human interaction.

Polansky and Kounin (1956) found in their work on the initial interview, that in order for a positive relationship to occur, "warmth" of the interviewer was not enough. Felt progress, interest of the interviewer, and an estimation of the interviewer's ability to help was also needed. This suggests that the role which the counselors and counselee may have been playing and their success, should be investigated, using other criteria to clarify future use of FIRO. It also suggests that the rewards and costs, such as indicated by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and Homans (1961), be considered.

One could hypothesize that the comfort level of the compatible treatment was such that the reactions as to progress and what was happening were minimal. In the incompatible sessions, counselors and counselees, whether consciously or unconsciously, worked harder and selectively to create the relationship. This procedure could explain the result of similar responses within the treatment, and varied responses among treatments.

Yalom and Rand (1966) suggested that for helping relationships to develop, a certain kind of homogeneity, as measured by FIRO-B was helpful. As suggested previously, perhaps the nature of the homogeneity or complementarity was not accurately assessed and implemented, to allow these dimensions to influence the initial interview.

Since trends in mean scores result in favor of the compatible treatment for counselors, other factors which may have confounded the results should be investigated. Along with a further study of the compatibility dimension, other factors such as the cognitive-perceptual (Mendelsohn & Geller, 1963) orientation, where similarity on this dimension led to more positive results, should be considered along with the affective-behavioral dimensions of FIRO.

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of compatible and incompatible interpersonal needs, as measured by FIRO-B, on counselor and counselee reactions toward the interview. If counseling is an interpersonal process, then the factors influencing this process should be given thorough consideration to determine their effect on the process and goals of counseling. This study was hopefully only an initial effort to study the interpersonal aspects of the counseling relationship.

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